

Copyright © Two Journeys Ministry

Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

www.twojourneys.org

Please use in accordance with the copyright policy found at twojourneys.org

The Parable of the Wedding Feast

Matthew 22:1-14

I will never forget the morning of July 29, 1981... I was driving to work at a job I hated, and I was listening to the radio, reports describing the most lavish wedding of our time... the Royal Wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer at the St. Paul's Cathedral in London;

Lady Diana's wedding train was 25 feet long, she arrived in a glass coach and took 3 and a half minutes to walk the red velvet aisle to the altar

750 million people from 58 countries watched this wedding by TV, and a privileged 3500 watched in person

I remember feeling incredibly jealous at that time... the couple was going to live a life of luxury and ease—they were going on an eleven day Mediterranean cruise, a gift of Queen Elizabeth... I was pulling into the parking lot of a job I hated, toiling my way through a life that seemed far less appealing

I remember wishing I'd been one of the privileged few invited to the wedding!

Little did I know what the future held

That couple had a tragic future in store—of conflicts and hostility, of adultery and misery, of the untimely death of Diana in a bizarre car chase in Paris

Whereas I, for my part, would be invited AND chosen for a far more lavish wedding banquet; fifteen months later, I would receive a royal invitation from Almighty God to become a Christian, and to be part of the most LAVISH CELEBRATION in history: the wedding banquet of the Lamb

In today's passage, Jesus likened God the Father to a King who wanted to put on a lavish wedding feast for His Son... it portrays God as a GENEROUS JOY-GIVER

Faulty views of God: "cosmic killjoy"... "the dread fear that someone somewhere is having fun"... "God leaning over the ramparts of heaven, seeing someone happy and yelling 'Cut it out!'"

These images of God are a Satanic lie... from the Garden of Eden, Satan has been telling man that God is holding out on us... that God is holding back joy and true happiness from us

The truth of the matter is quite different: The Book of Revelation has this to say about Satan

But of God, the Psalmist says this:

Psalm 16:11 you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand

And Paul puts it this way

1 Timothy 1:11 the glorious gospel of the blessed God

Which John Piper translates:

The glorious good news of the HAPPY GOD

In our passage today, Jesus portrays God the Father as a joy-filled host of a wedding banquet... he portrays heaven as a lavish, joy-filled feast in which the fattened oxen have been butchered and everything for the guests complete happiness has been provided... but AMAZINGLY people invited to the banquet are actually rejecting the invitation!!!

My earnest desire today is to explain the joy of God in such an appealing way that you will not only be INVITED to the wedding banquet, but actually BE THERE on that final day!

I. A Happy King Throws A Party

A. Context

1. The Final Week of Jesus' Life
2. Triumphal entry: Hosannah, Hallelujah... even the little children
3. BUT a week of CONFLICT with the Jewish authorities
 - a. They rebuke the children for praising Jesus
 - b. Jesus cleanses the temple... they conspire to kill Him
 - c. Jesus teaches in the temple area
 - d. The Jewish leaders confront Him on His authority to do all these things

e. Jesus tells two parables to uncover the Jewish leaders' rebellion against God

i) The Parable of the Two Sons... Jesus applies it

Matthew 21:31-32 "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³² For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.

ii) The Parable of the Wicked Tenants and the Vineyard... Jesus applies it

Matthew 21:43-44 "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. ⁴⁴ He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."

4. The Jewish leaders got the message:

Matthew 21:45-46 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them. ⁴⁶ They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

5. Why Jesus used parables

- a. A parable is a story from daily life used to illustrate a spiritual principle
- b. If you understand it, it is a very powerful teaching tool
- c. So Jesus told another parable... the parable of the Wedding Feast

Matthew 22:1 Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying:

B. The Parable Recounted

1. A Wedding Banquet Prepared for the Son

Matthew 22:2 "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son.

2. Servants Sent to Gather Invited Guests

Matthew 22:3 He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come

3. Those Invited Reject the Messengers

Matthew 22:3 but they refused to come.

4. The King Tries Again... More Messengers

Matthew 22:4 "Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'

5. Those Invited Attack the Messengers

Matthew 22:5-6 "But they paid no attention and went off-- one to his field, another to his business. ⁶ The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them.

6. The Rage of the King

Matthew 22:7 The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

7. The General Invitation Goes Out to Everyone

Matthew 22:8-10 "Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. ⁹ Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' ¹⁰ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad...

8. The Wedding Hall Filled with Guests

Vs. 10 and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

9. The King Evicts a Man Not Wearing Wedding Clothes

Matthew 22:11-13 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ¹² 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless. ¹³ "Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

C. The Parable Applied

Matthew 22:14 For many are invited, but few are chosen."

1. Jesus chooses these striking words to sum up the point of the whole parable
2. Fascinating, because the issue of "choosing" is not clearly in view
3. However, it makes perfect sense as we shall see
4. Jesus is contrasting the INVITATION to the wedding banquet with the actual attendance of the invitees to the banquet
5. Not everyone who gets invited is actually chosen to go

6. This fits the context: Jesus addressing the fact that the Jews are rejecting Him
7. This brings us squarely to the issue of the sovereignty of God in salvation: the free offer of the gospel and the response of human beings to it
8. **“Many are called, but few are chosen”**... an amazingly deep conclusion to an unforgettable parable

II. General Lessons from the Parable

A. The Lavish Character of the King

1. What does this parable teach us about the attributes of God?
2. Clearly the King in the parable represents God the Father... the King of the Universe
3. The wedding banquet analogy: pictures the relationship between the Son of God and the Church... a MARRIAGE
4. Attributes

a. Love

- i) First: the whole “wedding banquet” language = the love relationship between Christ and the Church
- ii) John the Baptist called Jesus “the bridegroom” and implied that the bride is made up of His disciples; when some of John’s disciples complained that Jesus was making and baptizing more followers than John, he answered

John 3:29 The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice.

- iii) Jesus called Himself the bridegroom

Matthew 9:15 Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

- iv) The Apostle Paul likened marital relations between a husband and his wife to the spiritual union of Christ and the Church
- v) The final consummation of the relationship between Christ and the church: a WEDDING in heaven as depicted in Revelation

- vi) The FATHER in the Parable is putting on a lavish feast for the Son at His wedding... He is delighted at the marriage, He LOVES the Son and wants to celebrate with Him and His bride
- vii) The whole context of the parable is the LOVE of the Father for His Son and of the Son for His bride

b. Happiness

- i) A wedding is a happy time, all over the world
- ii) The wedding banquet is a CELEBRATION... a time of HAPPINESS
- iii) It is a time of eating and drinking, of laughter and music
- iv) Our God is God of overwhelming joy, a HAPPY GOD
- v) How ridiculous that some people characterize the Puritan concept of God as some miserable being:

H.L. Mencken: Puritanism: The haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy.

Some people extend this characterization to all Christians and their view of God as hating happiness

- vi) God is a God of infinite happiness and pleasure

Psalm 16:11 You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand

The wedding banquet of Jesus Christ is ample evidence that God is a HAPPY God, a God of pleasure and joy

c. Generosity

- i) The King of the parable is portrayed as a lavishly generous King
- ii) He wants to share His joy with as many people as possible
- iii) The feast itself is lavishly appointed with the finest foods, and the King is delighted to share the richest of fare with all who attend the wedding banquet

Matthew 22:4 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'

iv) Some people are stingy:

Proverbs 23:6-8 Do not eat the food of a stingy man, do not crave his delicacies; ⁷ for he is the kind of man who is always thinking about the cost. "Eat and drink," he says to you, but his heart is not with you. ⁸ You will vomit up the little you have eaten and will have wasted your compliments.

v) God is lavishly generous!!!

d. Patience

- i) Three different times the King sends out His servants to invite people to the wedding banquet
- ii) AND the implication is clear that the first people invited had been invited even before the parable began... they knew the wedding banquet was coming; it's just that the messengers have now come to say that everything is finally ready
- iii) The King is incredibly patient... He keeps trying to fill the wedding hall with guests, even after being rebuffed again and again

e. Wrath

- i) However, once the people become violent and abusive, the King shows His wrath, His righteously passionate reaction to their wickedness
- ii) How else could the King respond? His servants have gone in His name to invite people to a long-prepared and anticipated wedding banquet... and the people have MURDERED them

Illus. Imagine a group of parents wanting to put on a lavish party for the inhabitants of a village; they spare no expense and get everything ready; then they dress up their CHILDREN in party clothes—the little boys wearing white suits and ties, the delicate little girls dressed up in spring dresses with wildflowers in their hair; they are sent into the village singing, happy and proclaiming the message that there will be a party later that afternoon—please COME; but the people, instead of coming, rise up and MURDER all the children

Can you imagine the emotional reaction on the part of the fathers of those murdered children

So it is with God and the messengers of the Gospel

In every generation, those bearing the good news of the gospel have travelled to distant lands to invite them to come to Christ and join the wedding banquet of the Lamb in heaven

In every generation, vicious, Satanic persecutions have arisen and poured out the blood of the messengers

God LOVES His messengers more than any human father loves his own children

God will JUDGE the persecutors if He doesn't convert them first

“Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me????”

iii) Wrath displayed in two ways in the parable; one of them predictable, the other one shocking

(i) First, the burning of the town

Matthew 22:7 The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

This refers initially to the destruction of Jerusalem as an act of judgment from God:

In 70 A.D., the Roman army came and completely destroyed Jerusalem

However, this is just the foretaste of the final judgment from God:

This represents the final act, God's wrath poured out on a persecuting earth with His judgments and with the Second Coming of the Lord

2 Peter 3:7 the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

Revelation 19:11-16 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. ¹³ He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. ¹⁴ The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵ Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

(ii) Second, the banishment of the man from the wedding hall also shows the wrath of God... more on that in a moment

f. Judgment

i) The keen assessment of the wedding hall and its guests... the perfect judgment of God

ii) Nothing escapes His notice, and His eyes are like blazing fire

iii) Simply by looking at each person, He is able to assess their condition

Matthew 22:11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes.

- iv) So God judges each of us perfectly, simply with His eyes searching our hearts and perfectly knowing our condition

Proverbs 20:8 When a king sits on his throne to judge, he winnows out all evil with his eyes.

B. The Stubborn Sinfulness of Man

1. The Jewish rejection of the Messiah

- a. The context of this parable is the rejection of Christ by the Jewish leaders
- b. It is very clear that the initial rejectors of the invitation are the Jews as a nation, led by their leaders
- c. They had been invited by the Prophets for centuries to be ready to come to the wedding banquet of the Messiah, the Son of God

Isaiah 55:1-2 Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. ² Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.

- d. But they WOULD NOT accept the Christ now that the time has come

Matthew 22:3 He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

When did this happen?

John 7:37-38 On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

- e. For years they had persecuted the prophets, and now they would also persecute the Apostles, missionaries, and evangelists that the Lord would send

Matthew 23:34 Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town.

2. Note the reasons for NOT COMING to the wedding banquet

- a. Simple, flat refusal... no reasons given at all... just NO

Matthew 22:3 He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

Illus. Can you imagine a friend of yours receiving an invitation to the Presidential Inaugural Ball in Washington D.C. (forget the politics of the illustration... just imagine an invitation to an event of this magnitude)

You say, "When are you leaving?" He says, "I don't think I'm going to go!" You say, "Why??" "I dunno... I'm just busy... I've got a lot of extra work to do around the company... I think I'll just work late that night." You look at him in amazement. "You're crazy! You get a once in a lifetime invitation, and you're skipping it to work late!"

That's what's going on in this parable!!

The King of the Realm is inviting people to an incredibly lavish celebration, the wedding of His Son, and

- b. "Paid no attention".... Made light of the invitation, as though it were nothing

Matthew 22:5 "But they paid no attention and went off-- one to his field, another to his business.

- c. Worldly distractions, especially MONEY

- i) A man chooses his work... money... earthly pleasures and possessions

Luke 14:18-20 "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.'¹⁹ "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'²⁰ "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'

- ii) Money offers security and happiness... the very thing God offers in eternity in heaven

- iii) These two are in direct competition with each other, offering the same thing by different means

3. Note the escalating wickedness

- a. Abuse: insults, mockery, opposition, usually of a verbal nature
- b. Finally, MURDER!!!!

This parable gives us a remarkable tour of human wickedness in rejecting the gospel

C. The Free Offer of the Gospel Worldwide

1. A central issue of this parable is that of the FREE OFFER OF THE GOSPEL
2. The people are invited to come... freely, with no compulsions
3. The King doesn't force them to come; He just sends out His messengers to get the word out that the banquet is ready
4. So also, after the ones who were first offered the gospel refused it, the King turns to a general ingathering around the world... this represents the turn to the Gentiles with a free offer of the Gospel

Acts 13:46-47 Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."

5. So the messengers go out into all the highways and byways with the same offer
6. In another version, the idea is one of a passionate appeal, "compel them to come"

Luke 14:23 "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full.'

D. The Mixed Nature of the Church

1. The results of this are clear in the parable:

Matthew 22:10 So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

2. So also the church is FILLED with people who have made some kind of response to the gospel message, but some are not truly chosen to be there
3. Only on judgment day can gospel hypocrites be weeded out
4. However, not everyone sees the "Wedding Hall filled with guests" as referring to the church
5. Better, they say, is that it is a picture of judgment day

E. The Mixed Nature of Judgment Day

1. The Son of Man (Jesus) will return and send out His angels; they will gather all nations and all will stand before Him
2. He will separate all people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats

3. Other parables teach the same thing: a mixed group that is separated

a. John the Baptist

Matthew 3:12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

b. Jesus—the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares

Matthew 13:30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"

c. Jesus—the Parable of the Dragnet

Matthew 13:47-50 "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. ⁴⁸ When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. ⁴⁹ This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

III. Three Major Doctrines Illuminated

A. The Sovereignty of God in Salvation:

Many are Called, Few Are Chosen

B. The Imputation of Christ's Righteousness:

"How Did You Get in Here without Wedding Clothes?"

C. The Joys of Heaven and the Terrors of Hell:

"The Kingdom of Heaven is Like a Wedding Banquet" AND "Tie Him Hand and Foot and Throw Him Outside Where there will be Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth"

IV. The Parable Applied

A. Understand the Essential Character of God: JOY

1. Reject Satan's lie about God
2. The "cosmic kill-joy" is SIN, not God
3. Satan, the purveyor of sin is the purveyor of misery

4. Jesus has come to give us LIFE

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

- B. Understand the Greatness of the Joy Waiting for Us in Heaven
- C. Understand the Importance of the Invitation to the Wedding Banquet
- D. Understand the Tragedy of Rejecting this Invitation
- E. Understand the Sovereignty of God in Salvation: Many are Called but Few are Chosen